UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING

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A WAY TO CONTROL CONFLICTS AND PROMOTE PEACE

Peace-keeping is one of the ways in which the United Nations helps to maintain international peace and security. In the UN context, peace-keeping has been defined as the use of multinational forces, under United Nations command, to help control and resolve conflict between hostile States, and sometimes between hostile communities within a single State. It is a technique pioneered by the UN—the soldier as a catalyst for peace rather than as an instrument of war.

Peace-keeping has saved countless lives. In many cases, it has proved invaluable in creating the necessary conditions to settle disputes peacefully through negotiation and in monitoring the implementation of agreements between hostile parties. This service to the cause of peace—by more than 500,000 soldiers and civilians since 1948—was formally recognized when, in 1988, UN Peace-keeping Forces were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Around the world, respect for the Organization's peace-keeping is growing. As the tensions of the cold war recede, the international community is turning increasingly to UN peace-keepers to help resolve regional crises. In 1988 and 1989 alone, there

were five new operations. And there are calls for others to perform an increasing variety of functions, which will require new combinations of military, police and civilian personnel.

United Nations peace-keepers can be dispatched as unarmed observers or as a lightly-armed peace-keeping force. They might be assigned to observe a situation and report to the Secretary-General, to supervise troop withdrawals or help ensure compliance with other agreements. They might investigate cease-fire violations or patrol buffer zones. Or they could be assigned to help supervise elections, monitor the maintenance of law and order and ensure the transition of a territory to independence. In addition, they often provide emergency medical services, assist in the resettlement of refugees, and work to restore normal civilian activities in strife-torn areas. And of course they serve to remind disputing parties that all the world is watching what they do.

HOW PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS ARE SET UP

When a UN Member State or group of States, or the Secretary-General, proposes the establishment of a peace-keeping operation, three basic conditions have to be met. First, peace-keeping operations are only established with the consent of the country or countries involved. Second, the proposal must enjoy broad support from the international community—specifically, it must attract the necessary votes to be adopted by the Security Council. Third, Member States must be ready to volunteer personnel.

The UN has an impartial role. Each of the parties must have confidence in the UN's impartiality. The success of an operation requires not only the parties' consent but also their full co-operation, especially regarding freedom of movement and the facilities necessary to carry out the mandate.

In order for the 15-member Security Council to adopt the proposal, there have to be at least nine votes in favour and no negative vote from any of its five permanent members (China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States). The Secretary-General reports to the Council on how the operation can be launched and carried out. Subject to the Council's approval, he must then make the necessary arrangements—choosing the Force Commander and asking Member States to provide troops, police or other civilian personnel, supplies and equipment, transportation and logistics support.

In approving the Secretary-General's report, the Council also decides how the operation will be paid for: on a voluntary basis or, as is usually the case, on an obligatory basis as expenses of the Organization in accordance with provisions in the Charter. In this latter case, the General Assembly decides how those costs are apportioned among the Member States.

PEACE-KEEPING MEANS A MINIMUM USE OF FORCE

Only in exceptional circumstances may UN troops use force. They carry light arms and are allowed to use minimum force only if they are attacked, or if armed persons try to stop them from carrying out the orders of their commanders. And UN observers normally carry no arms at all.

This means that UN soldiers can be put in the uncomfortable position of having to wait to be fired on before they can fire back. But if they were to take the initiative in using force against whoever might be threatening the peace, they would violate the United Nations' most basic peace-keeping principle—to intervene in a dispute only with the consent of the parties. When they shoot, they have clearly lost the consent of those they are shooting at.

The effectiveness of peace-keeping forces derives from a combination of factors—the physical presence of armed soldiers who will return fire if they are fired upon, the moral authority of the UN and the pressure of world public opinion. These work together to deter the hostile parties from taking rash military action.

THE PEACE-KEEPERS— MEN AND WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE

At the beginning of 1990, some 20,000 personnel were serving in 10 UN peace-keeping operations.

In addition to more than 14,000 troops and military observers, there were also civilian police monitors and civilian support staff contributed by Governments, staff members from the UN Secretariat and locally recruited civilians.

United Nations soldiers wear the uniforms of their own countries, but at the same time they also wear UN blue berets or blue helmets. In operational matters they serve under their UN commander, who takes his orders from the Secretary-General (who is himself responsible to the Security Council), but they remain under national command in matters of pay, discipline and promotion.

Some of the peace-keepers are regular soldiers whose units are assigned to serve with a UN peace-keeping operation for a specified period. Others are reservists who volunteer to be sent by their Governments to serve with the United Nations. A normal tour of duty lasts six months to a year. Some countries maintain units and individuals on stand-by for UN service in case the Secretary-General should seek their support at short notice.

The requirements of peace-keeping can be very different from those of normal soldiering; diplomacy and tact are needed more than combat skills. Some of the major troop contributors, such as the Nordic countries, provide special training programmes for UN service. But these soldiers of peace can also find themselves under fire in dangerous situations. Several hundred of them have given their lives while serving with the United Nations.

THE UNITED NATIONS CONCEPT OF PEACE-KEEPING

The main responsibility for peace-keeping lies with the Security Council. The UN Charter states that when the Council determines the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, it shall decide what the UN should do to maintain or restore international peace and security. The Security Council looks first for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. If its recommendations are not followed by the parties involved, it can call for

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action by the international community, which might include asking Member States to make armed forces available to enforce its wishes.

Since the UN was founded, there has in fact been only one military enforcement action—in 1950, when the Security Council, in a series of resolutions, recommended that Member States "furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack" against it, and that States providing military forces and other assistance make such forces available "to a unified command under the United States". That operation differed from peace-keeping operations, which are based on the consent of the parties, are not permitted to use force except in self-defence, and are under the command of the Secretary-General.

Peace-keeping as a concept is not specifically described in the UN Charter, but it has evolved over the years as an internationally acceptable way of controlling conflicts and promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes. And it introduces to the military sphere the principle of non-violence. For the first time military forces are used internationally *not* to wage war, *not* to establish domination and *not* to serve the interests of any Power or group of Powers but rather to control and end conflict between peoples or communities.

To date, there have been 18 peace-keeping operations (see map and table, overleaf). Of these, 8 were peace-keeping forces and 10 were military observer missions. This distinction is not, however, absolute. Unarmed military observers are often attached to peace-keeping forces, and specialist military units, sometimes armed, can be attached to observer missions. Several past operations have included major civilian elements, the UNTAG operation in Namibia being the most recent example. At UNTAG's maximum strength, there were 4,462 military personnel, 1,500 police monitors, 945 election supervisors provided by Governments and 1,651 UN employees, from 124 nationalities in all. Future operations may require other combinations of personnel performing an increasing variety of functions.

Currently, there are 8 peace-keeping operations in the field (see overleaf for detailed description).

RECEIVING THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

The Secretary-General accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway, on 10 December 1988 on behalf of United Nations peace-keepers. With him were seventeen Blue Berets representing United Nations operations in the field.

In presenting the Prize, Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee Egil Aarvik requested a moment of silence to honour the then 733 peace-keepers who had lost their lives in the service of the UN. He said "They came from different countries and had widely different backgrounds, but they were united in one thing: they were willing to devote their youth and their energy to the service of peace. They volunteered to the service, knowing that it could involve risk. It became their lot to pay the highest price a human being can pay."

It is not easy to live up to the standard of conduct of a United Nations peace-keeper, especially for a soldier trained to use force against force. In the Secretary-General's words: "To remain calm in the face of provocation, to maintain composure when under attack, the United Nations troops, officers and soldiers alike, must show a special kind of courage, one that is more difficult to come by than the ordinary kind. Our United Nations troops have been put to the test and have emerged triumphant. In the history of United Nations peace-keeping operations, there is already a long list of acts of heroism and self-sacrifice . . ."

N.T.B. FOTO

PEACE-KEEPING FORCES

November 1956—June 1967
First United Nations Emergency Force in Sinai (UNEF I)

July 1960—June 1964
United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC)

October 1962—April 1963
United Nations Security Force in West New Guinea (West Irian) (UNSF)

March 1964—To present
United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)

October 1973—July 1979
Second United Nations Emergency Force in Sinai (UNEF II)

June 1974—To present
United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)

March 1978—To present
United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

April 1989—March 1990
United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG)

OBSERVER MISSIONS

June 1948—To present
United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)

January 1949—To present
United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)

June 1958—December 1958
United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL)

July 1963—September 1964
United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM)

May 1965—October 1966
Mission of the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Dominican Republic (DOMREP)

September 1965—March 1966
United Nations India-Pakistan Observation Mission (UNIPOM)

April 1988—March 1990
United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP)

August 1988—To present
United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG)

January 1989—To present
United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM)

November 1989—To present
United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA)